



United States Department of State Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Finding Creative Ways to Help Syrians

July 31, 2014

Colleagues and friends:

Asheq is a policeman who patrols an opposition-controlled area of war-torn Aleppo. Against all odds, he and his colleagues are trying to establish a civilian police force so citizens can carry on with their lives amidst the chaos and destruction of war. Asheq receives no salary from the government because he defected and the regime no longer controls that part of Aleppo. But the United States and Denmark have stepped in to provide stipends for him and 1,300 other Aleppo policemen, along with operating funds, uniforms, vehicles, equipment, and resources for the police to engage local communities.



Aleppo Free Police officers stop a car as part of a routine security check.

This effort is part of the Integrated Community Security Program (ICSP), a pilot initiative launched last year in Aleppo. Since then, [CSO](#) has expanded it into a multilateral partnership with the Department of State's [Bureau of Counterterrorism](#), the United Kingdom, and Denmark. The Netherlands will join in the coming months. Today, assistance flows into Aleppo and is poised to begin in Idlib and northern Lattakia.

Syrians told us they need this kind of help to provide security and access to justice in areas liberated from Assad's regime. They believe these services are prerequisites for other types of activities -- good governance, relief work, education, economic activity -- to succeed. Otherwise, violent extremists thrive, human rights suffer, and humanitarian aid fails to reach the needy.

Working as part of the Syrian Transition Assistance Response Team (START), CSO's Syria programs contribute to the U.S. strategy to support moderate elements in the opposition. The work helps foster a negotiated transition that leads to a representative government that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Syrian people.

To fulfill this objective, the CSO team remains committed to helping the moderate opposition make areas they control safe and functional. "The courage and dedication of the Syrians is incredibly inspiring," said Aaron Faust, one of our Arabic-speaking staff members who recently returned from the field. "The Aleppo Free Police have had to move their headquarters multiple times due to regime shelling, and violent extremists consistently target their stations and officers. Considering the wartime circumstances they operate in, the mere fact that they still exist is remarkable."

Police are not the only ones eligible for assistance. Lawyers, judges, local and provincial councils, and community groups are, too. The judicial sector is not yet ripe for CSO assistance, but we continue to engage these critical local stakeholders to find ways to help.

Every locality is different, so we tailor our packages to meet the community's needs. Before CSO provides aid, potential recipient institutions must demonstrate basic competency, pass counterterrorism and human rights vetting, commit to financial and public transparency, and pledge to operate in accord with international standards of human rights, including protections for women and minorities.

The ICSP illustrates the value of multilateral partnerships. The British are not paying stipends in Idlib, so the United States plans to fill the gap in coordination with Denmark. In turn, the British are providing community engagement support to the U.S.- and Danish-funded Aleppo Free

Police. CSO saves \$458,000 in administrative costs by co-funding the program -- money that instead pays for communications gear, vehicles, or other assistance.

Similarly, CSO's U.S. government partners strengthen the effort in important ways. Fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other violent extremists threaten moderate Syrians, making input and support from the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism invaluable. In addition, we work with the [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor](#) to integrate human rights concerns into the design and implementation of the program. Others helping to shape the response include [USAID](#), the [Department of Justice](#), and the State Department's [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs](#).

The ICSP is one of CSO's four lines of effort to bolster the Syrian opposition in coordination with START.

A second line of effort provides assistance to local and provincial council members and to civil society organizations. CSO has provided office and communications equipment to 1,100 Syrians and trained 1,300 of them in good governance, local administration, strategic planning, secure and strategic communications, and civil defense. The civil defense component brought together local councils, police units, and search and rescue squads to establish joint command-and-control infrastructures to respond to emergencies. We recently handed responsibility for civil defense assistance to other international donors.

A third line of effort broadcasts and amplifies the voice of Syrian opposition media. CSO provides technical and financial support to 13 independent media outlets on radio and satellite TV. These outlets leverage U.S.-funded equipment, training, and mentors to broadcast professional programming, including national and local news, entertainment, humanitarian announcements, and cultural affairs directly to Syrians. Our media partners have editorial control over all content. CSO provides the tools and training for them to collaborate, professionalize their operations, operate more safely, and broaden their reach. CSO-supplied equipment allows our media partners to reach many major population centers in Syria.

The fourth line of effort offers non-lethal assistance to Free Syrian Army (FSA) units in order to sustain the opposition's struggle against the regime and extremist groups. CSO assistance includes medical equipment and ambulances, cargo trucks and special-purpose vehicles, and communications equipment. We have also delivered blankets, mattresses, over half a million MREs (meals ready to eat), and 6,000 food baskets to the FSA and their families.

As we look to continuing the U.S. government's support for the Syrian opposition, we will be working with our partners in State and across the U.S. government to assess these programs and develop a way forward for a more sustainable approach.

We are dedicated to bringing [innovative approaches to conflict-prevention and response](#) throughout the State Department. We welcome your ideas on how we can help nations beleaguered by conflict. You can write us at CSOpublic@state.gov. We also encourage you to forward our news to people you think would like to join this conversation. Previous dispatches are located [here](#). You can find us at [@StateCSO](#) or www.facebook.com/StateCSO.

Best,



Ambassador Rick Barton
Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Operations

P.S. U.S. efforts to deplete Joseph Kony's notorious Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa continue to pay dividends. Recently two more LRA fighters defected and turned themselves into the

African Union Regional Task Force (AU-RTF), one of our partners. Both said that they had heard the come-home messages broadcast from helicopters and had seen leaflets, which motivated them to escape. One defector agreed to accompany an AU-RTF reconnaissance patrol to the area where his former group operated. The LRA has shrunk from 1,000 six years ago to fewer than 150 today. However, the LRA continues to pose a threat to civilians in southeastern Central Africa Republic, taking 41 hostage in Kpangou village on July 9, 36 of whom were subsequently released. CSO has had a series of stabilization officers deployed to Uganda to help coordinate this project, and Jon Gandomi's work has made him a finalist for a major award. Click [here](#) to read more about his efforts.

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